

The Plan by agnesamaranth

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Summary:

Mike decides to officially ask El to be his girlfriend with a grand romantic gesture. Of course, nothing ever goes according to plan.

The Plan

Author's Note:

Hey all! This is just a short little one shot I wrote, inspired by a headcanon I posted on Tumblr and the tags *Tori (themikewheelers)* shared about it. I'd love to hear your thoughts. Cheers!

I.

Everything has to be perfect.

That was the mantra Mike Wheeler had been repeating all day, the words running on a loop through his mind and falling from his lips at a rate that made Lucas want to buy military-grade earplugs.

Mike had shown up at his front door early that Saturday morning, a worn notebook in hand and a look of tentative exhilaration set on his features. At first, Lucas had thought Mike had come to ask for advice on the campaign he was planning for the following weekend, but after breakfast—Mrs. Sinclair's famous buttermilk blueberry pancakes—the boys had clambered up the stairs to Lucas's bedroom where Mike had revealed the real reason for the nervous energy he was exuding.

Sophomore year of high school and Mike was finally—*finally*—going to ask El to be his girlfriend.

Sprawled across his bed, bouncing a tennis ball off the ceiling, Lucas listened to Mike, seated on the floor with his back against the bed frame, prattle on excitedly about his grand romantic plan. Nodding along, Lucas carefully limited his eye rolls to only the sappiest portions of Mike's plan, voicing his thoughts on the logistics of the more difficult elements and, of course, repeatedly vowing to keep everything a secret.

It was, Lucas thought, fairly amusing for Mike to be stressing out so much over what seemed, to him, to be a given. Mike and El were practically already a couple and everyone knew it. They spent a ton

of time together and regularly held hands at the arcade while waiting for their turn on the Skee-Ball machines. The boys regularly teased Mike about his more-than-obvious crush on El and Lucas happened to know, thanks to Max, that El frequently doodled Mike's name in the margins of her notebooks.

Despite all this, Lucas thought he understood why Mike was so intent on designing the perfect moment to officially ask El out.

Last month, when Dustin had recounted the details of asking Maryanne Hewitt to be his girlfriend, Mike had looked put out, as though he had somehow failed El. Truthfully, Lucas didn't think El would care at all, but Mike was his best friend and El was like his sister and he wanted both of them to be happy. And so he agreed to help out in any way possible.

"Okay," Mike's voice pulled Lucas out of his thoughts, "Phase One: The Letter."

II.

Mike let out a long, slow breath, his heart steadying significantly, its pounding dissipating in his chest. With the letter delivered, he would just have to wait for El to move to the next phase of the plan.

But as he turned to go, Mike caught sight of the number of the locker he had just deposited his letter into—1323.

He instantly erupted into a cold sweat. El's locker was 1324.

Mike mentally kicked himself. How could he have been so stupid? He'd opened it countless times this year, leaving El chocolate milk every Friday morning and picking up his Art supplies on the way to fifth period every day.

"Shit," Mike hissed under his breath, "Shit. Shit. Shit."

Hurriedly, he glanced around at the bodies milling through the hallway and realized, with a sinking feeling, that he wouldn't be able to do anything about this mistake now. It was a realization confirmed by the sound of the bell ringing to signal third period, shriller than

Mike could ever remember it being. He took one last forlorn look at the wrong locker that now held his letter captive and turned on his heel toward Science, not wanting to be late.

When he reached the classroom, Mike slipped into his seat next to Lucas, who was already there and flipping through his binder. Lucas took once glance at him and asked what was wrong, something clearly not right with the pallor of Mike's face.

"I messed up," Mike grimaced, avoiding eye contact with his friend. Lucas stared at him with a cocked eyebrow and Mike got the distinct impression that Lucas wasn't surprised by this revelation.

"What'd you do?" Lucas asked, already grinning.

Mike's cheeks turned from terrified white to mortified red. "I slipped the letter into the wrong locker. Into Rachel Gordon's."

For a moment, Lucas didn't react, looking as though he didn't believe what he'd heard. Then he burst into a fit of laughter, clutching at the stitch in his side.

"It's not funny!" Mike whined, slamming his head down to his desk, wishing the floor would open up and swallow him. "I'm screwed."

"Relax Mike," Lucas said, his laughter subsiding, "We'll check it out after school today. Rachel's out sick today."

Mike swallowed and nodded weakly as the teacher walked in. He didn't really absorb much Science that day.

III.

"Just keep watch," Lucas instructed, waving Mike away, and shaking his head and giving his past self hell for agreeing to any of this.

The school day had ended thirty minutes ago and now that the halls were empty, Lucas was working at picking the lock on Rachel Gordon's locker, a skill Nancy had taught him back in 1984. But after a full five minutes of trying with no progress, Lucas had to admit defeat.

He stepped back from the locker and Mike immediately rushed to his side, hoping for good news.

Lucas looked slightly apologetic. "There's no way I'm going to be able to open it."

"What am I going to do?" Mike groaned, sidestepping and pressing his forehead against El's locker, closing his eyes in defeat. Lucas came up behind him and clapped Mike on the back encouragingly.

"I guess you should start figuring out how to tell Rachel Gordon that you're not actually in love with her." Though he tried, Lucas couldn't keep the sound of amusement out of his voice and Mike only groaned louder.

"Or maybe you could just ask me."

The boys whipped around, eyes falling upon El, both of them surprised she had managed to sneak up on them so quietly.

"I told you to keep watch," Lucas muttered under his breath, glancing at Mike, who looked like a deer caught in headlights.

Both Lucas and El waited a long moment for Mike to say something, but his mouth opened and closed uselessly and Lucas, for what felt like the umpteenth time that day, rolled his eyes.

"Hey El," he greeted her with a wave, "How was History?"

El narrowed her eyes at the boys in suspicion, slowly moving her gaze from Mike's tomato-coloured face to Lucas's nervous smile. "It was good," she said, lips slightly pursed, "What are you two trying to get out of Rachel's locker?"

"Her, uh, her homework," Mike finally piped up, his voice little more than a squeak. Lucas shot him a glare and resisted the urge to elbow him in the ribs—that was the worst lie he had ever heard. And judging by the way El tilted her head to the side and raised her eyebrows at Mike, she felt the same way.

A smile tugged at the corners of El's lips and she brushed past the boys, approaching Rachel's locker. "You're a terrible liar, Mike."

With a quick, almost imperceptible nod, Lucas and Mike heard the mechanism of Rachel's locker click and the door swung open. The boys stared, dumbfounded.

"Just hurry up," El muttered, gesturing towards the open locker. Mike immediately jumped into action, reaching for the pink envelope that had settled just on top of a stack of textbooks.

Once his fingers were clasped around it, Mike let out a sigh of relief. "Got it." He didn't hold the letter for long though; before he knew it, the envelope was pulled from his fingertips, floating through the air and landing in El's outstretched hand.

"What is it?" she asked, voice curious.

Lucas smirked. "Yeah Mike, what is it?"

Mike shot Lucas a red-faced glare that only made him laugh harder. He leaned forward, close to Mike's ear. "Just go with it." Then turning to El, he waved. "I'm gonna head out. See you guys tomorrow."

"See you," Mike whispered weakly. El echoed his sentiment, returning the wave.

"Well?" El shook the envelope as Lucas disappeared around a corner. She was very interested in its contents, but didn't plan on opening something that wasn't hers to open.

"I was supposed to leave it in your locker," Mike mumbled his confession, eyes downcast, "I had this stupid plan and it backfired and—"

"A plan for what?" El cut him off, beginning the tear at the edges of the envelope, knowing now that it was intended for her eyes.

Mike didn't answer immediately, instead gesturing towards the envelope as El pulled out its contents: a folded piece of paper full of his messy scrawl. Quietly, El scanned the letter, her expression softening from a smirk into a surprised smile, her eyes growing wide. She looked up at Mike, beaming.

“What’s Phase Two?” she grinned.

Mike licked his lips, his mouth suddenly dry. “Well, I made you this mix tape and—” he paused, unshouldering his backpack and kneeling to rummage around for the small tape he had slipped in there that morning.

He could hardly believe it—the tape wasn’t there.

El noticed the look of concern wash over his features. “Mike?”

“I lost it,” Mike said, his tone disbelieving. A beat of silence passed and El burst out laughing. Mike looked up at her, at the carefree joy on her face, and couldn’t help himself. He started laughing as well.

“You’re a human disaster, Mike Wheeler.” She held out her hand and helped him to his feet. Standing, Mike pulled her into a hug, resting his chin on top of her head.

“Would you still, uh, want to be my girlfriend?”

El pulled away slightly and looked up at him, rolling her eyes playfully. “Yes.”